



Military & Veteran Affairs Committee

**Wednesday, March 8, 2006
1:30 PM – 3:00 PM
24 HOB**

Committee Meeting Notice

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Speaker Allan G. Bense

Military & Veteran Affairs Committee

Start Date and Time: Wednesday, March 08, 2006 01:30 pm

End Date and Time: Wednesday, March 08, 2006 03:00 pm

Location: 24 HOB

Duration: 1.50 hrs

Consideration of the following bill(s):

HM 887 Defense Appropriations by Stargel

HB 955 Veterans' Nursing Home of Florida Act by Proctor

Military & Veteran Affairs Benefits: A State to State Comparison- Staff Presentation by Chris Shaffer

NOTICE FINALIZED on 03/06/2006 14:42 by Welcher.Stephanie

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

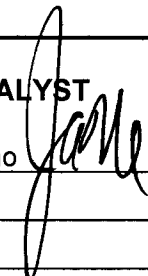
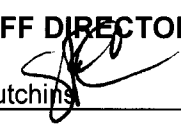
BILL #: HM 887

Defense Appropriations

SPONSOR(S): Stargel

TIED BILLS:

IDEN./SIM. BILLS:

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR
1) Military & Veteran Affairs Committee		Marino 	Cutchins 
2) Rules & Calendar Council			
3) State Administration Council			
4) _____			
5) _____			

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

From 2002 to 2005, the Congress passed the Defense Appropriations Bill before any other appropriations bills. Through this memorial, the Florida Legislature commends the Congress of the United States for making our nation's defense its first budgetary priority in those years and requests that Congress continue this tradition in 2006 and in future years.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. HOUSE PRINCIPLES ANALYSIS:

Not Applicable.

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Present Situation:

In the wake of the terror attacks on America, President Bush urged the U.S. Congress to pass the Defense Appropriations Bill before passing other spending bills. In a speech, he said, "And so I urge Congress to get moving on the appropriations process, particularly when it comes to the Defense bill. Generally, here in Washington, they wait and put the Defense bill out last. I'm not going to read any reasons why into that; it just happens. I'll let the experts tell you why. It seems like to me if we're at war -- and we are at war -- that they ought to get the Defense appropriations bill out first, and not play games with the Defense appropriations."¹

From 2002 to 2005, the Congress passed the Defense Appropriations Bill before any other appropriations bills. In 2004, the Florida Senate approved a memorial commending the Congress for making our nation's defense its first priority in 2002, and requested the Congress to continue this tradition that year and in future years.

Effect of Proposed Changes:

This memorial expresses legislative findings that the security of our nation and its people is the first and foremost obligation of the Federal Government, that our men and women in uniform, because of their courage and self-sacrifice, deserve the best equipment and resources to protect our nation. Additionally, the memorial expresses the finding that Congress has had a tendency in the past to delay passing the Defense Appropriations Bill until late in the budget year opening it to the addition of appropriations that are not defense-related.

Through this memorial, the Florida Legislature commends the Congress of the United States for making our nation's defense its first budgetary priority in 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2005 and requests that Congress continue this tradition in 2006 and in future years.

The Florida Legislature further resolves that copies of this memorial be dispatched to the President of the United States, to the President of the United States Senate, to the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and to each member of the Florida delegation to the United States Congress.

C. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Not Applicable.

¹ George W. Bush. "President Calls on Congress to Show Fiscal Responsibility: Remarks by the President at Meeting of the Leaders of the Fiscal Responsibility Coalition." April 16, 2002 <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/04/20020416-8.html>> (February 20, 2006)

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

There are no known or expected fiscal impacts on state government revenues.

2. Expenditures:

There are no known or expected fiscal impacts on state government expenditures.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

There are no known or expected fiscal impacts on local government revenues.

2. Expenditures:

There are no known or expected fiscal impacts on local government expenditures.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

There are no known or expected direct economic impacts on the private sector.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

This memorial does not require counties or municipalities to spend funds or to take an action requiring the expenditure of funds. This bill does not reduce the percentage of a state tax shared with counties or municipalities. This bill does not reduce the authority that municipalities have to raise revenues.

2. Other:

There do not appear to be any constitutional issues with this memorial.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

Not Applicable.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

Not Applicable.

IV. AMENDMENTS/COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE & COMBINED BILL CHANGES

HM 887

2006

House Memorial

A memorial to the Congress of the United States urging passage of the defense appropriations bill before all other appropriations bills.

WHEREAS, the security of our nation and people is the first and foremost obligation of the Federal Government, and

WHEREAS, the men and women of our United States Armed Forces now serving in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Merchant Marines, National Guard, and Reserves have shown great courage and self-sacrifice and deserve to be equipped with the best weapons and provided with the best resources to protect our nation, and

WHEREAS, in the past, Congress has delayed passage of the defense appropriations bill until late in the budget year, making the bill susceptible to the addition of appropriations unrelated to the defense budget needs, and

WHEREAS, in the wake of the terrorist attacks on the United States of America, on September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush asked that the Congress of the United States pass the defense appropriations bill before passing other spending bills, and

WHEREAS, Congress acted responsibly in 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2005 by passing the defense appropriations bill before any other appropriations bill, thereby lessening the possibility of unrelated appropriations being added to the bill while providing the necessary funding to protect the men and women in our Armed Forces, NOW, THEREFORE,

HM 887

2006

30 Be It Resolved by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

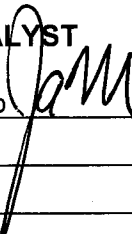

31

32 That the United States Congress is commended for making our
33 nation's defense its first priority in 2002, 2003, 2004, and
34 2005 and is requested to continue this important tradition by
35 passing the defense appropriations bill before all other
36 spending bills in 2006 and in future years.

37 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
38 dispatched to the President of the United States, to the
39 President of the United States Senate, to the Speaker of the
40 United States House of Representatives, and to each member of
41 the Florida delegation to the United States Congress.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 955 Veterans' Nursing Home of Florida Act
SPONSOR(S): Proctor and others
TIED BILLS: **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** SB 1370

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR
1) Military & Veteran Affairs Committee		Marino 	Cutchins 
2) Health Care Appropriations Committee			
3) State Administration Council			
4) _____			
5) _____			

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

When Katrina struck Florida and the Gulf Coast in August 2005, the Governor issued a series of executive orders promulgating a state of emergency, which allowed for mutual assistance between the coastal states affected by the hurricane. In an effort to assist eligible veteran disaster evacuees from Mississippi and Louisiana, the State Coordinating Officer issued a subsequent supplemental order providing a temporary waiver of the 1-year residency requirement for admittance to Florida's veterans' nursing homes.

House Bill 955 authorizes the executive director of the FDVA to waive the 1-year residency requirement for admittance to a state veterans' nursing home for a veteran from another state who is otherwise eligible for admission to a Florida state veterans' home. The bill stipulates, however, that the waiver may only be invoked if the veteran is a disaster evacuee from a state under a declared state of emergency.

HB 955 also revises the admittance priority by ensuring that Florida veterans who meet all eligibility requirements for admittance to a state veterans' home retain priority over out-of-state veterans who have had the residency requirement waived.

This bill takes effect July 1, 2006.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. HOUSE PRINCIPLES ANALYSIS:

Empower families – This bill increases family stability by providing a dwelling and health care for certain out-of-state disabled veterans during times of emergency.

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Present Situation:

Florida's Veterans' Nursing Home Act

The Veterans' Nursing Home of Florida Act¹ authorizes the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA) to run licensed health care facilities². The law establishes veteran status, medical necessity, residency, and fiduciary requirements for an applicant to be admitted to any of Florida's five state veterans' nursing homes. The law creates an admittance priority that is based on the disability of the veteran and then on their ability to pay for nursing home care. The law also requires the state veterans' homes to receive contributions from their residents.

In order to be eligible for admittance to one of the state veterans' homes, a veteran³ must:

- Be in need of nursing home care;
- Have been a Florida resident for 1 year immediately preceding, and at the time of application for, admission to the home;
- Not owe money to the FDVA for services rendered during any previous stay at a department facility; and
- Have applied for all financial assistance reasonably available through governmental sources⁴.

In addition, the law disallows discrimination against admitting an applicant based on race, age, sex, creed, religion, national origin, or any other discriminatory reason except for the applicant's veteran status⁵.

Regarding admittance priority, the law differentiates between veterans applying for admittance to a state veterans' home based on their disability. A veteran who has a service-connected disability⁶ or who was discharged from military service for a disability received in the line of duty that resulted in the need for nursing home care, may be admitted into a state veterans' home⁷. Additionally, a veteran who has a non-service-connected disability but is unable to defray the expense of "civilian" nursing home care, and who attests to such under oath, may be admitted into a state veterans' home⁸. However, the veteran with the service-connected disability will receive admittance priority over the veteran with the non-service-connected disability⁹.

¹ Part II, Chapter 296, F.S.

² Pursuant to Part II, Chapter 400, F.S.

³ As defined in Section 1.01(14), F.S.

⁴ The types of financial assistance from the government that veterans should apply for may include Medicare, Medicaid, and pension or disability benefits from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

⁵ Section 296.35, F.S.

⁶ as determined by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

⁷ Section 296.36(2)(a), F.S.

⁸ Section 296.36(2)(b), F.S.

⁹ Section 296.36(2), F.S.

The law also requires that each state veterans' home cover, but not exceed, the actual cost of operating and maintaining the home primarily through contributions from the residents admitted to the home. The administrator of the nursing home, with the approval of the executive director of the FDVA, determines a sliding-scale payment schedule. Each resident who receives a pension or other compensation from the federal government, or income from any other source of more than \$35 a month, contributes¹⁰ to his or her maintenance and support based on his or her ability to pay.

Occupancy

Florida's veterans are reaping the benefits of the states veterans' nursing home program. According to the FDVA's Fiscal Year 2004-2005 Annual Report, the occupancy rate for the state veterans' home program is approximately 91-percent. This does not include, however, two new facilities that opened in 2003, which are allowed two years to meet state approved performance standards, and another facility that is undergoing Americans with Disabilities Act renovations. The overall occupancy decreases to 81-percent when all facilities are included. In the Annual Report, the FDVA claims it will continue to work towards achieving a 90-percent or higher occupancy rate.

The approximate wait times reported by the FDVA also reflect the high occupancy rate as well as demand from the state's veterans. Although the FDVA does not maintain a waiting list for admittance into the state veterans' homes, the department did provide information regarding possible wait times¹¹:

<u>Facility</u>	<u># On List</u>	<u>Approximate Wait Time</u>
Springfield	4	30-90 days
Lake City	0	3 days
Daytona	6	30 days
Pembroke Pines	22	60-120 days
Port Charlotte	15	30-90 days
Land O' Lakes	33	30-180 days

The department explained that some veterans are on the wait list due to the introduction of specialized Alzheimer's beds in the homes. This would have a bearing on admittance procedures for a veteran with Alzheimer's if the home to which they were applying was not equipped with enough such beds.

Residency

Disabled veterans appear to face two types of residency criteria in regard to the provision of medical services at state veterans' nursing care facilities. The first is the Veterans' Nursing Home of Florida Act admittance requirement for one year of residency in the state. The second relates to residency status for receiving governmental assistance, such as Medicaid, which must be applied for as another condition for admittance into the home.

The Medicaid Program has established certain rules relating to the provision of services inside and across state lines. These rules require the state of residence to be responsible for providing Medicaid to eligible residents of that state¹². For institutionalized persons, such as those in veterans' nursing homes, these rules have determined that for the purposes of receiving Medicaid, the state of residence is the state where the individual is living with the intention to remain permanently or for an indefinite period of time¹³.

Additionally, the Medicaid rules prohibit a state from denying Medicaid eligibility:

¹⁰ Section 296.37(1), F.S.

¹¹ Communication with Greg Puckett, Program Director State Veterans Homes. February 21, 2006. Email on file with Committee on Military & Veteran Affairs

¹² Title 42 C.F.R. s. 435.403(a).

¹³ Title 42 C.F.R. s. 435.403(i)(4).

- To an individual in an institution, who satisfied the Medicaid residency rules, even if that individual did not establish residency in the State before entering the institution¹⁴; or
- To an individual who has not resided in the state for a specific length of time¹⁵.

As noted above, should an individual from another state be admitted to a Florida veterans' nursing home, it would appear that the Medicaid rules relating to residency requirements would not be a deterrent to receiving Medicaid benefits as a subsidy to the cost of the nursing home care.

Effect of Proposed Changes:

When Katrina struck Florida and the Gulf Coast in August 2005, the Governor issued a series of executive orders¹⁶ promulgating a state of emergency, which allowed for mutual assistance between the coastal states affected by the hurricane. In an effort to assist eligible veteran disaster evacuees from Mississippi and Louisiana, the State Coordinating Officer issued a subsequent supplemental order¹⁷, providing a temporary waiver of the 1-year residency requirement for admittance to Florida's veterans' nursing homes. As a result of the supplemental order, the FDVA reports that three such out-of-state veterans were helped¹⁸.

House Bill 955 authorizes the executive director of the FDVA to waive the 1-year residency requirement for admittance to a state veterans' nursing home for a veteran from another state who is otherwise eligible for admission to a Florida state veterans' home. The bill stipulates, however, that the waiver may only be invoked if the veteran is a disaster evacuee from a state under a declared state of emergency. This provision, it should be noted, does not grant Florida residency to such a veteran, it simply waives the residency requirement under the Veterans' Nursing Home of Florida Act.

Without this bill, it appears that the only manner in which out-of-state disaster evacuee veterans would have access to Florida's veterans' homes in the future would be for the Governor to declare a state of emergency again. This would negatively affect those out-of-state veterans who are disaster evacuees if Florida did not declare its own state of emergency during the same time their home state declared a state of emergency. For example, had Katrina not hit south Florida, then the Governor would not have declared a state of emergency clearing the way for the waiver that eventually helped Mississippi and Louisiana veterans once Katrina turned north and hit those states.

HB 955 also revises the admittance priority by ensuring that a Florida veteran who meets all eligibility requirements for admittance to a state veterans' home has priority over an out-of-state veteran who has had the residency requirement waived as provided for above. This appears to have no impact on the residency considerations for Medicaid described in the Present Situation.

This bill takes effect July 1, 2006.

C. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1. Amends s. 296.36, F.S., by authorizing the executive director of the FDVA to waive residency requirements for certain, otherwise eligible disabled veterans for admittance to a Florida veterans' nursing home, and by subsequently revising admittance priorities.

Section 2. Provides that this act shall take effect July 1, 2006.

¹⁴ Title 42 C.F.R. s. 435.403(j)(2).

¹⁵ Title 42 C.F.R. s. 435.403(j)(1).

¹⁶ Executive Orders 2005-176, 2005-177, and 2005-183.

¹⁷ Supplemental Order to Executive Order 2005-176 issued September 2, 2005 and amended October 4, 2005 (under Executive Order 2005-183).

¹⁸ Communication with Jim Brodie, Legislative Director, Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs. March 1, 2006. Email on file with Committee on Military & Veterans Affairs.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

This bill has an indeterminate impact on state government revenues. It is unknown how many eligible out-of-state veterans this bill would allow to gain access to Florida's veterans' homes, and it is unknown how many such veterans would bring in revenue for the state through their means or through government assistance programs.

2. Expenditures:

This bill has an indeterminate and, as the FDVA states, "possible minimal short term Medicaid impact¹⁹" on state government expenditures. The impact is indeterminate because every out-of-state veteran eligible under this bill will have a different set of circumstances. Some will have sufficient means to cover their support costs at a veterans' home and others will rely more on government assistance. The impact is minimal since even though Katrina was one of the most destructive storms on record, only four veterans from affected states even inquired about admission to a Florida veterans' home.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

There are no known or expected fiscal impacts on local government revenues.

2. Expenditures:

There are no known or expected fiscal impacts on local government expenditures.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

The bill does not require counties or municipalities to spend funds or to take an action requiring the expenditure of funds. This bill does not reduce the percentage of a state tax shared with counties or municipalities. This bill does not reduce the authority that municipalities have to raise revenues.

2. Other:

There do not appear to be any constitutional issues with this bill.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

This bill does not appear to grant any rule-making authority.

¹⁹ Amended Admission Policy for State Veteran Nursing Home Admission. Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs. August 18, 2005.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE & COMBINED BILL CHANGES

HB 955

2006

A bill to be entitled
An act relating to the Veterans' Nursing Home of Florida
Act; amending s. 296.36, F.S.; authorizing the director of
the Department of Veterans' Affairs to waive the residency
requirement for admittance to a veterans' nursing home
under certain circumstances; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Section 296.36, Florida Statutes, is amended to
read:

296.36 Eligibility and priority of admittance.--

(1) To be eligible for admittance to the home, the person
must be a veteran as defined in s. 1.01(14) and must:

(a) Be in need of nursing home care.

(b) Have been a resident of the state for 1 year
immediately preceding, and at the time of application for,
admission to the home.

(c) Not owe money to the department for services rendered
during any previous stay at a department facility.

(d) Have applied for all financial assistance reasonably
available through governmental sources.

(2) The director may waive the residency requirement for a
veteran who is otherwise eligible under Florida law for
admittance to a home. The waiver must be limited to a veteran
who is a disaster evacuee of a state that is under a declared
state of emergency.

HB 955

2006

28 (3)~~(2)~~ Admittance priority must be given to eligible
29 veterans ~~afforded~~ in the following order of priority ~~to an~~
30 ~~eligible veteran who is in need of nursing home care and who:~~

31 (a) An eligible veteran who is a resident of the State of
32 Florida.

33 (b)~~(a)~~ An eligible veteran who has a service-connected
34 disability as determined by the United States Department of
35 Veterans Affairs, or was discharged or released from military
36 service for disability incurred or aggravated in the line of
37 duty and the disability is the condition for which nursing home
38 care is needed.

39 (c)~~(b)~~ An eligible veteran who has a non-service-connected
40 disability and is unable to defray the expense of nursing home
41 care and so states under oath before a notary public or other
42 officer authorized to administer an oath.

43 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2006.



The Florida House of Representatives

Interim Project Report

January 6, 2006

Committee on Military & Veteran Affairs

Representative Stan Jordan, Chair

MILITARY AND VETERAN BENEFITS

A STATE TO STATE COMPARISON

PURPOSE:

Military personnel and veterans are eligible for an array of benefits in each of the fifty states in the United States. This report categorizes and catalogs those benefits across the individual states, to provide a backdrop against which to compare the programs and benefits Florida currently offers.

RESEARCH/METHODOLOGY:

Attached to this summary are two extensive tables compiled by Military & Veteran Affairs Committee staff to provide a break down of benefits offered by the various states. The table showing benefits provided to military personnel is current as of this year, and was provided by the National Governors' Association. Committee staff compiled the information for the table on Veteran Benefits by State by contacting the veterans' agency in each state.

The table¹ for military personnel and guard members is divided into six categories of benefits: State Employees, Educational Benefits, Tax and Financial Benefits, Family Support, Licensing and Registration, and Other Support.

The table² for veterans is divided into 8 categories of benefits: Tax/Financial Benefits, Employment Benefits, Education Benefits, License Plates, Nursing Homes/Healthcare, Recreational Benefits, Burial Benefits, and Miscellaneous Benefits.

¹ State and Territorial Support for National Guard and Regular Military Members and their Families, a report by the National Governors Association

² Veteran Benefits by State, a report by the House Committee on Military & Veteran Affairs

The description for each state program is given in-brief in the tables to allow for an _____ across the board comparison. Committee staff is prepared to provide resource contacts if more in depth information on any particular state's programs is desired.

FINDINGS:

There are unique programs throughout the country designed to raise the quality of life for the nation's servicemen and women, and the benefits vary greatly from state to state. All of the states in the study have passed or are working on legislation to assist military and veteran personnel. Some of the benefits provided are unique to the particular states while others are commonplace throughout the country. Most states provide some type of tax (tax or fee deductions) or financial benefit (property tax exemptions) to military personnel and veterans. Many states also provide some form of education benefit (e.g. free tuition or tuition assistance). A number of states also provide some type of burial assistance, generally internment in a state cemetery. The state cemeteries are operated separately from the federal veterans' cemeteries.

Florida provides a wide range of benefits not only to the military personnel, national guardsmen, reservists, and veterans domiciled in the state, but also extends a number of benefits to spouses, dependents, and beneficiaries. For example:

- Florida provides a property tax exemption to veterans in the state. The exemption is \$5,000 to any veteran with a disability of ten percent or more. Most states provide a similar benefit with little variation in the eligibility requirements. However, Florida differs from other states by extending that exemption to the spouse of the deceased veteran.
- Florida provides discounted hunting and fishing licenses to active duty personnel and veterans. Many other states provide discounted licenses or free licenses. Due to the large active duty and veteran populations in Florida it would be cost prohibitive to provide free licenses to all those eligible.
- Florida also provides free tuition to the children of deceased or completely and permanently disabled veterans. Other states provide similar educational benefits, however, few states provide the educational benefits to the spouse of the deceased or disabled veteran.
- Florida also has a unique program that was passed in the 2005 Regular Session. The Family Readiness Program was enacted by HB 1069. This legislation created a fund enabling the Florida Department of Military Affairs to receive applications and give grants to families of guardsmen and reservists. The grants are designed to assist in emergency situations arising from the change in pay due to deployment.

To provide perspective on how Florida lines up in a comparison with other states, it is helpful to take a look at recently enacted legislation affecting military personnel and veterans in this state and in those states that are comparable in size and diversity of population, ability to fund programs beneficial to military personnel, and number of military personnel stationed within their borders. These other states include: California, Texas, New York, and Pennsylvania.

The four states mentioned above all have some programs benefiting military personnel stationed within their borders. The benefits range from discounted hunting and fishing licenses³ to property tax exemptions⁴ to the creation of new state agencies to oversee base protection and community redevelopment⁵. Examples of these can be found in New York and Florida; two states that have passed broad legislative packages to benefit military personnel and veterans. New York passed the Patriot Plan I and II in the years 2003 and 2004 respectively and Florida passed SB 1098 in 2003 and HB 1604 in 2004.

All the states listed above provide some type of educational benefit. California mandates that “school districts give preference to the children of military personnel applying to attend a school outside of their residence.”⁶ Florida provides that military dependent children can be given first preference when they meet the requirements for special academic programs.⁷ Texas HB 503 provides educational benefits already granted to Texas veterans, to veterans of the War on Terror⁸. New York provides tuition and requirement exemptions in the Patriot Plan I and II. Florida and New York provide tuition exemptions to the children of deceased veterans. New York also extends the benefit to the children of severely disabled veterans whose disability is combat related.

Florida and New York have prohibited discrimination against military personnel in rental agreements. Many renters would refuse to rent to military personnel because they were concerned the rental agreement would not be seen to completion due to a change in orders. The Florida Uniformed Service Members Protection Act and the Patriot Plan I in New York expressly prohibit discrimination against military personnel in rental agreements. In relation to rental agreements Florida also provides a right to early termination under certain circumstances of a rental agreement involving military personnel, National Guardsmen or Reservists.

The breadth of Florida’s benefits, when compared to those offered by other states, elevates this state to a very favorable position. This is a particularly notable accomplishment since Florida has one of the largest populations in the country of potentially eligible recipients (1.8 M), making the fiscal impact of each benefit a significant factor for the Legislature to consider when new programs are proposed.

³ Florida, New York and Texas

⁴ Florida and Pennsylvania

⁵ California

⁶ California Assembly AB 208

⁷ Staff Analysis of HB 1604 Appropriations and Comprehensive Planning and Military and Veterans' Affairs, Base Protection, and Spaceports

⁸ Staff analysis of HB 503 by Guillen, House Committee on Veteran Affairs & Military Installations

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The majority of states in the US provide a significant array of benefits to military personnel and veterans. Although many of those benefits may be attractive to Florida, due consideration should be given to the fact that it may be cost prohibitive due to the size of the potentially eligible populations in this state.

The best service Florida may be able to provide to military personnel and veterans would be to assure proper administration and monitoring of current programs, to ensure efficient and effective delivery of benefits.

Please review tables located at the following web site for additional information:

[http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Documents/publications.aspx?CommitteeId=2257&PublicationType=Committees&DocumentType=Interim%20Projects%20\(Reports\)&Session=2006&SessionId=42](http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Documents/publications.aspx?CommitteeId=2257&PublicationType=Committees&DocumentType=Interim%20Projects%20(Reports)&Session=2006&SessionId=42)

More specific information on benefits for military personnel, veterans and dependents in Florida may be obtained by contacting the following sites.

Department of Military Affairs
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399
(850) 414-9049

Florida National Guard
<http://www.floridaguard.army.mil/>

Department of Veterans' Affairs
4040 Esplanade Way, Suite 180
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-7 016
(727) 319-7403
<http://www.floridavets.org/>